

SAN DIEGO COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
JUVENILE RANCH FACILITY INSPECTION REPORT
2007

Facility Name: JUVENILE RANCH FACILITY
Superintendent: Dan H. DeLeon

Inspection Date: 1/9/2008
Last Inspection Date: 7/12/2006

Address: 957 Forrest Gate Road
Campo, CA 91906

Telephone Number: (619) 401-3500
Fax: (619) 401-3512

Type of Facility: Juvenile Camp

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge:
Honorable Susan Huguenor

Staff Interviewed:

Dan DeLeon, Facility Director
Keith Hicks, Administrative Supervisor
Carlene Schaefer, Kitchen Supervisor
Noreen Petroveli, Nurse
Teachers Assistant

Total Bed Capacity: 250
Currently 3 Dorm Capacity: 154
Population on inspection date: 152

Juvenile Justice Commission Chair:
Steve Wiley

Commission Inspector:
Jesse Zlotnik

Comments and Recommendations:

The Juvenile Ranch Facility is a juvenile institution, which provides a dormitory-style residential program for delinquent boys. The total capacity at the facility is 250 beds. The facility is divided with programming for two categories of offenders. There are two dormitories known as Rancho del Rayo, housing boys aged 12-16½, with an 84-day program focusing on substance abuse and Breaking the Cycle of Addictive Thinking. A separate area, known as Rancho Del Campo, focuses on older (aged 12 to 18 years) boys addressing short-term commitments, and a Breaking Cycles and a STOP (Short-Term Offender Program) component redirecting delinquent behavior focus.

The Juvenile Ranch Facility is administered by Dan DeLeon. The San Diego County Office of Education administers the Rancho del Campo High School, certified Kindergarten through 12th Grade, and is attended by all wards at the Juvenile Ranch Facility. Medical and Mental Health services are provided by California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG).

The inspector noted the general camp condition and operations appeared markedly improved over previous inspections. The inspection team noted the consistent theme amongst all staff members on site to provide a positive atmosphere and to encourage wards to participate in various programs and to take accountability for their actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is important to note that many of the recommendations from prior inspections had been addressed prior to this evaluation. Though the Lindamood-Bell Literacy program is no longer funded at camp, the camp has developed and administered its own reading clinic to replace this previously successful program. The camp has also acquired within-camp transport vehicles to allow for emergency transportation of staff and wards as well as day-to-day mobility.

1. Increased access to individual counseling for wards, either through clinically trained staff or paraprofessional mentoring.
2. Replace defaced windows in the Rancho del Rayo dormitories.
3. Toilet fixtures in the bathrooms may require replacement if they are not able to be properly cleaned/refurbished.
4. Diversify and upgrade sports equipment.

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AREA REVIEWED:

R= Reviewed

NR=Not Reviewed

I= Interviewed

NI – Not Interviewed

QUALITY OF LIFE

Physical Plant - R
Meals/Nutrition - R
Mental Health - R
Physical/Dental Health - R
Religious Services - R
Volunteer Involvement - R
Visiting - R

PROGRAMS

Education - R
Vocation/Employability - R
Community Services - R
Victim/Gang Awareness - R
Substance Abuse - R

PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Minors - I
Superintendent - I
Medical/Psych. Staff - I
School Staff - I
Supervisor - I
Supv. Staff
(Counselors) - I
Food Services Staff - I

GENERAL INFORMATION

Has the facility exceeded capacity since the last inspection?

No. Total capacity, with all dorms at camp open, is 250 beds. County staff is constantly adjusting to the variable needs of the Juvenile Court. While the available geographic area available could be significantly increased for a larger population, this would take a significant capital improvement budget. Existing buildings are adequate, but aging. The current capacity (154) seems well suited to the current programs and staffing.

Does the facility house minors under Section 601 Welfare & Institutions Code?

No: Juvenile Ranch Facility houses only §602 Welfare & Institutions Code offenders.

SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION INDICATE:

Number of Suicides: 0

Number of Attempted Suicides: 0

Number of Deaths from other causes: 0

Number of Escapes: 1 (6 wards, all captured)

Number of attempted escapes: 2.

Local Inspections: Fire Inspection: March 7, 2007
Health-Environmental: July 16, 2007
Health-Medical/MMH: July 16, 2007

Date of Last Fire Drill: December, 2007

STAFFING

Staff to Child Ratio:

Awake hours ratio – On average, 1 staff to 10 wards, but can go as high as 1 to 15.
Sleeping hours ratio -- 1 Staff representative for every 30 wards.

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Communication In Language Minor can Understand?

Compared to last year's inspection there are more posters, audio visual aids and announcements in Spanish. At no time did communications between staff and wards appear inhibited due to language considerations. Mr. Hicks assured that there is plenty of bilingual staff, and there is always at least one Spanish speaking staff member on duty.

Diversity of Staff:

The camp setting appeared to enjoy a broad cultural and ethnic staff diversity.

Staff/Minor Interactions:

Observed interactions between staff and wards appeared relaxed and comfortable. Commands and instructions from staff to wards appeared non-threatening. Many of the interactions between staff and wards appeared warm, with smiling and apparent unhesitant compliance from wards.

Staff Interviews – Comments:

General comments reflected positive atmosphere and concern to provide a positive learning atmosphere within the facility. Staff appeared pleased with their experiences working at the camp and portrayed an optimistic view of their effectiveness in providing a healthy, supportive environment for the wards.

CONDITIONS OF GROUNDS

Lawns, Playing fields, Blacktop, Asphalt and Other:

The Juvenile Ranch Facility is located in the East County, which has mountainous topography, and experiences extreme summer and winter temperatures. In general, the facility has natural vegetation and has limited landscaping. The inspector was impressed with the expansiveness of the playing fields, including a full-sized football field with natural grass. The pool was in the midst of its regularly scheduled cleaning. The walking paths and basketball courts were swept free of debris.

EXTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

General condition, paint, roof, drains/gutters and etc.:

The physical plant has been well cared for within budgetary constraint. While the pre-World War II buildings are aging, they are certainly not dilapidated. An emerging issue has been the fact that repairs and upgrades are significantly inhibited by the need to comply with the local Campo Historical Society's standards for historically accurate renovation.

INTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

Walls, paint, floors, drains, plumbing fixtures, air vents, windows, etc.:

Overall, the interior of all buildings reflected the well-worn, long-term use of the facilities. The Rancho del Rayo dorms, which are newer facilities, appeared to be in good overall condition. Graffiti was noted on the windows in the sleeping dorm area, which appears to be correctable by replacing the windows. The older dorms of the Rancho del Campo area were also generally in good condition; however, toilet fixtures in the bathrooms continue to exhibit significant amounts of rust and may require replacement if they are not able to be properly cleaned/refurbished.

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Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored?

Supplies are maintained in a secure building. Wards are not allowed to enter the building without staff supervision.

Weapons Locker Location:

Weapons lockers were not reviewed during this inspection.

Recreation/Sports Equipment:

The recreation and sports equipment was serviceable, but clearly an effort to diversify and upgrade (perhaps by donations) would be beneficial. The balls and equipment were kept in bins alongside the courts and easily accessible to wards throughout their recreation time.

Are the hallways clear and doors propped open?

Entrances, hallways, activity rooms and sleeping spaces appeared well maintained and free of obstructions.

Court Holding Area:

Not applicable to Juvenile Ranch Facility.

Sleeping rooms/dormitories:

Dormitories and sleeping rooms appeared to be properly maintained, with climate control and good ventilation. The Rancho del Rayo dorms have an additional sleeping area for the "white hat" program, in which are kept the television and video games. There was an additional amount of space and privacy for wards rewarded through this program for their good behavior.

Beds:

Generally wards are assigned to bunk beds. The bottom bunks are a minimum of 12" above the floor.

Art, books, personal possessions allowed in sleeping rooms?

A very limited amount of personal possessions are allowed in the dorms. The lockers had been removed in the Rancho del Campo dorms due to problems with contraband.

Graffiti Present?

Graffiti was generally not evident around the camp. The most obvious graffiti was the defaced windows of the Rancho del Rayo dormitory as well as the windows of the cafeteria. The staff viewed graffiti as an unavoidable issue at the camp. However, graffiti occurring on areas other than windows is quickly removed or covered up. During this inspector's visit, the staff was conducting a "graffiti shakedown" of the wards personal spaces to find the marker used in a recent graffiti incident. Administration would like to replace the defaced windows (and has done so on a limited basis); however, as was mentioned, again this year it remains a budget issue.

Ample blankets?

There appeared to be blankets on all beds and staff said additional blankets are made available on request of a ward.

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Study Area:

Study areas appeared to be orderly and well lighted. The library facility is a triumph of creativity and care. Staff has created an environment that would be envied by many upscale public schools. The library contained a modern computer lab and an extraordinarily diverse stock of books at a wide range of reading levels.

Adequate Lighting?

All areas of the camp appeared to have adequate lighting.

Temperature:

The primary facility buildings, including all dormitories, are equipped with central air conditioning and forced air heating.

ORIENTATION OF MINORS

Are minors oriented to rules and procedures?

Upon arrival to the facility, all minors are introduced to the policies, rules and procedures by administrative staff. Further indoctrination takes place during the intake procedure and when wards are assigned to dorms. Many of the policies, rules and goals of the facility are conspicuously posted in dorms and study areas.

Are rules and grievance procedures posted?

Yes, the facility recently adopted a new Grievance Form, which is available in all dorms, in well-marked dispensers. The grievance procedure is included in the indoctrination process.

Are rules and grievance procedures understood by minors?

Yes, staff states that all wards are well versed in the grievance procedure. This was confirmed during our interviews with wards.

Minors Interviewed – Comments

Two wards from Rancho del Rayo were interviewed separately. One ward indicated that this was his second time at JRF, and that he was at the camp for a longer stay this time. He stated that he was impressed with the school materials and that the food was surprisingly tasty. He related that he had learned through his time that the wards were "only as strong as our weakest link." He reported that the dorms were comfortable, though they could get "a little cold." He continued that the vents had recently been fixed, and that "it's definitely getting warmer." He reported that he felt safe at JRF and enjoyed being out in the natural surroundings instead of his neighborhood or one of the indoor facilities.

The second ward was a member of the "white hat" program, and stated that he and his fellow white hats were responsible for the chores, mopping and laundry. He reported that the outdoor activities and sports were among his favorite things about the camp. This ward also had positive reviews for the food at the camp. He also stated that school was "good, but strict." Among his highest reviews for the camp was the attentiveness and compassion of the staff. According to the ward, "The staff are cool. They counsel you." He noted that he had not had staff take such a personal interest at his other juvenile justice placements.

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MEALS/NUTRITION

Kitchen – Clean; are knives and chemicals locked?

The kitchen area appeared clean and properly maintained. Knives and chemicals are secured by staff; wards are not left unsupervised in the kitchen area.

Have the youths working in the kitchen been trained?

All wards working in the kitchen complete a brief sanitation training course; wards are not left unsupervised in the kitchen area.

Are meals served or cafeteria style?

The kitchen layout provides cafeteria-style food dispensing in an area adjacent to the dining room hall. Wards utilize a tray to contain their food, and then move into the dining hall where they have assigned table seating. Tables generally seat six wards, three to each side; however, a few tables provide eight seats, four per side.

Are minors permitted to converse during meals?

There is a quiet time in effect when getting food and entering the dining area. After all are seated, staff will allow conversation at the table. Communications with wards from other dormitories is prohibited.

Is Staff present and supervising?

Yes. This inspector spoke with the kitchen supervisor. She had positive reviews for the effort and respectfulness put forth by the wards. Her attitude was pleasant and supportive.

Is weekly menu prepared? Is it posted?

Menus are prepared by a Certified Nutritionist who oversees general menus as well as special diets for medical purposes. The program is contracted out to the Sheriff's Food Services Unit which has won national awards for institutional meal service.

Are servings ample, nutritious and appetizing?

The food service appears to be ample and nutritious. As in all institutions, food is a significant factor for all wards; given that there is no individuality of selection and there is little or no "fast food" or "junk food" consumed while in the facility.

Length of time allowed for eating?

Normal mealtime is twenty minutes, which appears to be sufficient time to consume the meals.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF MINORS

Appearance?

All wards observed had proper appearance; the clothing appeared clean and free of excessive worn spots, rips, tear and etc. Rules require wards to maintain certain standards, such as no excessive blousing of shirts, pants not too low on the hip, etc.

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Showers – Frequency? Privacy maintained? Supervised by Staff? Any assaults in showers?

Showers are present in the dormitory areas for all wards. Shower facilities are communal, with minimal privacy for the individual. The reduced privacy allows staff adequate monitoring. Staff does not report a significant number of assaults in the shower area. The shower areas, without exception, were extremely well maintained, clean and dry.

Condition of clothing – Does clothing fit? Is it appropriate to weather?

As noted previously, on the date of inspection all wards appeared to have clean, well-maintained clothing. On the inspection date, the weather was cold and brisk, and all of the wards were dressed appropriately with long pants and thickly lined jackets.

PROGRAMS

Recreation/Exercise – types and amount each day.

Every ward is provided a minimum of three hours of recreation per day. Wards receive one hour during school hours, a second hour during the afternoon period, and a third after evening showers. There is generally more recreational time spent on weekends. The amount of recreation time can be affected by inclement weather: heat in summer and snow in winter.

Access to Religious Services?

The camp still struggles to provide a wide breadth of religious services. However, Catholic services are held at the camp every other Monday. Also, every other Thursday a deacon is available for some one-to-one counseling.

Medical/Mental Health Services

Medical and Mental Health services are provided by California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG). A medical doctor is available on-site 1-2 days a week. Mr. Hicks noted that only a small number of the wards are taking prescribed psychotropic medications compared to the number at Juvenile Hall or East Mesa. Psychology staff are available on site one day a week and "Telepsych" videoconferencing is available for wards to consult with the physician at Juvenile Hall for medication management.

Volunteer Program:

The camp has had difficulty getting volunteers due to its remote location. Staff expressed that if more volunteers were available, the camp would be best served by those who have had some counseling experience and could "relate to the kids."

Counseling and Casework:

Currently, there are 4-5 dorm staff daily in each dorm at JRF; 1 part-time Psychologist; 2 Phoenix House counselors, and 1 MITE counselor and 2 Breaking Cycles counselors in the Rancho del Rayo program.

Rancho del Rayo Programming:

Rancho del Rayo programs include community programming provided by Phoenix House Staff, a non-profit drug treatment organization operating "Therapeutic Communities" in New England, Florida, Texas and California. Therapeutic Community (TC) is defined as a community whose structure, daily activities, and interaction of its members are designed to promote personal change in its participants. The TC is geared to help members develop the skills needed for recovery, generally through organized seminars,

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group meetings and observed individual participation. In addition to the Phoenix House programming, Rancho del Rayo provides AA/NA meetings, the McAlister Institute for Treatment and Education, and a 12-week Drug Counseling program. Wards assigned to Rancho del Rayo also participate in programs designed to encourage wards to train and motivate by example, such as the White Hat program, the highest level of recognition a ward can attain. The camp also has a "top dorm" program, which is used as an incentive for all kids in each dorm. The top dorm is calculated by looking at the number of school "kick-outs," dorm cleanliness, and failed days in the program for the entire dorm. The winning dorm gets an ice cream or nacho party and each member of the dorm gets one day taken off their sentence.

Rancho del Campo Programming:

Rancho del Campo programs, Breaking Cycles, and a STOP (Short-Term Offender Program) redirecting delinquent behavior focus. Specific programs include the Pillars of Character; Aggression Replacement Therapy; Drug/Alcohol Counseling; Literacy Program. All programs include full attendance at Rancho del Campo High School, Psychological Counseling, Wards Encourage each Day to Succeed Program, Character Counts, Church Services, and Random Drug testing.

DISCIPLINE OF MINORS

Frequency and type:

Three (3) levels of discipline are employed at the Juvenile Ranch Facility. Lowest Level: Verbal – not documented; Mid Level: Mark Down – recorded and may result in loss of points/privileges or Rule Violation (RV) may result in additional days at JRF for violating major rules; Highest Level – Termination from facility. At all levels of discipline, the staff is oriented to try to resolve the issue if possible. Escalating the discipline to higher levels is considered a final option.

Number and Type:

Mr. Hicks noted that most of the infractions occurring at the camp are minor and can be addressed through verbal correction. He was encouraged by the fact that there had only been approximately four terminations during his time in this role. Those were typically related to escapes and kids getting out of control. Administrative removals from the camp occurred sporadically and are not a regular occurrence at the camp.

TELEPHONE

Access:

There is a payphone and a free phone located in the dormitories and wards are encouraged to make a minimum of a weekly call to home. Use of the free telephone is provided as a reward for good behavior and wards are frequently allowed brief, 5-minute phone calls during evening hours.

CORRESPONDENCE

Is Postage Free? Is incoming and/or outgoing mail read? Is there confidential correspondence?

Incoming mail is scanned for contraband and obvious content related to gang activities and escape plans. Envelopes are removed from the letters. Staff allows as much confidentiality as possible to correspondence by the wards.

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VISITING

Is there adequate space, convenient times or accommodations to parent work schedule, etc. special visits? Does staff supervise visits? Is there adequate privacy?

Visitation is normally held in an outdoor picnic area. Staff oversees the visiting. Visitors are not permitted to give presents or any material to wards. The visiting hours are normally on Sunday afternoons, between noon and 3 p.m.

Have all minors had visits?

The administration regrets the low number of families who take advantage of the visiting program, acknowledging the powerful role family has in accomplishing rehabilitation. They cited the remote location of the facility as a significant factor in this adverse behavior.

SCHOOL

Teachers – Number of full-time; frequency of substitutions.

School staff is as follows: Principal (1); Secretaries (2); Registrars (3); Teachers (10); Teachers Aides (6); Instructional Aides (1); Student Support Specialist (1); Parent Liaison (1); Counselor (1).

Number of minors in school/per classroom.

All minors at JRF attend school. The only acceptable reason for missing class would be medical issues, court-related appearance and, on infrequent occasions, wards assigned to special duties (kitchen, etc) may miss some classroom time. Classroom size varies based on population; the typical classroom size is 10-15 students.

Number of Minors on independent study:

There is no independent study program at the JRF. Class attendance is mandatory. In another sense, class size is small enough that a great deal of individual focus is possible. The minors are provided with homework and there is also a reading clinic provided.

Atmosphere of classroom:

On the date of inspection, students in classrooms were not observed. Class instructional periods average 50 minutes and classes are conducted five days a week between 8:00 a.m. and 2:35 p.m.

Adequate Supplies? Books, paper, computers, etc.

School supplies appeared to be adequate.

Activities and coursework:

Class curriculum covers Language Arts, Reading, Mathematics, Science (Physical and Life), Social Science (History, Economics, and Civics), Physical Education, GED Preparation, and Computer applications.

Are minors required to do homework?

Minors are generally given a small amount of homework.

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Relationship between school and probation staff.

On the date of inspection, there was an obvious atmosphere of shared respect and common goal to benefit the wards between all staff on site. The administrative supervisor of the camp meets with the school staff weekly. He reported that "there are sporadic issues with protocol. But the relationship is good."

/end